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Summary

Arguing that the police field suffers from excessively narrow frames of reference and perspectives, this paper asserts that a top priority for the 1980s police agenda must be on establishing a broader perspective for the development of theory and study of policing and explores the implications of those values and trends which the author contends will shape policing for the remainder of the 20th century, identified as (1) demographic changes, (2) the diminishing quantity of fossil fuels, (3) the accelerating rate of monetary inflation, (4) rapid developments in technology (5) changing attitudes toward the acceptance of a conflict model for achieving social change objectives, (6) continuing democratization and equalization of human society and its institutions, (7) increased danger and damaging consequences from natural and manmade disasters, and (8) need for higher levels of knowledge and skill for performing future police responsibilities.

POLICE: An Agenda
for the 80's

by

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POLICE AGENDA FOR THE 1980's

Albert Einstein illustrated the importance of the concept of relativity. Whether or not an object dropped from a moving train travels in a straight line downward is dependent upon the position of an observer. To the person who - situated on the train - drops the object, it travels straight below him to the earth; to the person standing on the embankment when the object is released, it travels in a parabolic curve to the ground. Similarly, whether or not a particular agenda for the police is considered appropriate depends on the evaluator's perspective and frame of reference.

Unfortunately, to date and into the foreseeable future, the police field will continue to suffer from researchers, scholars, administrators and students who are mindshackled by excessively narrow frames of reference and perspectives. The heavy reliance of academia and the police leadership on normative based, micro approaches to the assessment of policing is producing a great deal of meaningless if not harmful knowledge. Had we been around in the 1800's and relied on present approaches, we would have focused on designing methods for keeping slaves from causing disorders rather than dealing with the institution of slavery.

Illustrations of our narrowly conceived approach to evaluating and improving police are legion. We study conspicuous patrol when the value of our approach to order maintenance and justice administration might be questioned; we study management modifications for investing more authority in managers and supervisors when we should be assessing the bureaucratic perspective underlying policing; we study police firearms use policies when we might be questioning whether police should routinely carry guns; we study methods for improving police apprehensions when we might consider the value of arresting and detaining people. We rely on a "criminal justice" taxonomy for studying police operations when the major aspects of the police role are related to civil and human service functions. The currently popular project approach to the management of policing is a good example of an operationalized narrow perspective which may result in more harm than benefits to the society.

Clearly, a top priority for the 1980's police agenda must be on establishing a broader perspective for the development of theory and study of policing.

Forecasting is as uncertain as it is inevitable. It involves a risky mixture of values, knowledge, and guesses about the unknown. Among the values and trends which will shape policing for the remainder of the 20th century are (1) demographic changes, (2) the diminishing quantity of fossil fuels, (3) the accelerating rate of monetary inflation, (4) rapid developments in technology,

(5) changing attitudes toward the acceptance of a conflict model for achieving social change objectives, (6) continuing democratization and equalization of human society and its institutions, (7) increased danger and damaging consequences from natural and manmade disasters, and (8) need for higher levels of knowledge and skill for performing future police responsibilities. Each of these areas has many implications.

Demographic Changes. The proportion of youth in the population will decrease. Although this change should produce reductions in certain types of crimes, such crime decreases may be offset by the impact of increases in youth unemployment. Police will also be forced to devote more attention to the needs and deviancy of older citizens. Population shifts will be back into cities and urban areas. This reversal of the population movement will combine with the immigration from impoverished Spanish speaking areas of the Americas to create a variety of social conflict problems for urban areas.

Diminishing Fossil Fuel. Police should be preparing to operate with less and much more expensive fuel. The cost of gasoline will likely escalate to as much as \$10 per gallon by 1990. Increases in fuel prices alone will make traditional patrol methods impractical. Price and fuel allocation systems will also result in substantial changes in transportation styles and crime problems. The trend toward enhancement of public transportation will continue. The ratio of auto fatalities to passenger miles will decline. Issues of social control in mass transportation systems will become an increasingly significant factor in police planning. The nature of theft will shift to blackmarketing, bootlegging, embezzlement and hijacking. As with dangerous drugs, illicit market systems could develop depending on the economic control strategies of the government.

The Inflationary Economy. The prediction of national economic and fiscal trends is a dangerous sport even for learned economists, none-the-less major changes in the American economy are inevitable.

The impact of inflation on policing will be significant. By 1990 several police chiefs will enjoy annual salaries in the neighborhood of \$150,000. Patrol officers in some cities will be earning \$125,000 per year. The consequences of these situations for existing retirement systems - the majority of which are not presently on an actuarially sound foundation - need attention.

Technological changes. Communication and information technology will be substituted for cutbacks in transportation. Police in many jurisdictions are likely to be stationed at video observation positions from which they will respond to emergency situations. Personalized communication devices will enable citizens to contact

police for immediate responses. By 1990 police may be experimenting with the use of command centers high above metropolitan areas. These command centers may be football field size facilities supported by dirigible type arrangements. Audio-video oversight of the populated regions should increase police effectiveness in street crime apprehensions. In fact, street crime per se will likely be nearly eliminated by the turn of the century. In spite of a greater level of personal safety in the streets, danger outside of systematized control areas will be high. Although these methods carry the stench of 1984, they are presently being inconspicuously slipped into place without public attention or fanfare.

Technology will also have other consequences for crime. Traditional common law crimes of theft, robbery and burglary will undergo changes in form if not principle as computers are used to separate owners from their property. Consumer, corporate and environmental crimes will replace the present high priorities. Investigation of such crimes will be moved from police to prosecutorial and special policing agencies. In addition, private companies should be providing much of their own investigative services by 2000.

Conflict Model. The fact that American leadership tends to neglect social problems until faced by serious consequences will be reflected in social change efforts of the 1980's. People with special interests will increasingly rely on the disruptive social conflict model to get favorable action on their demands.

Inside the police field labor type activism will increase. Employee organizations will expand their areas of concern beyond economic matters to include working conditions and decision making authority in areas traditionally reserved for managers.

Provided world peace continues, public demonstrations and disorders are likely to increase in the last half of the 1980's. Disruptions will also stem from growing economic and energy problems if technological breakthroughs do not provide a fix. Public confidence in conflict as the most expeditious route to change will grow if established institutions do not cope with citizen frustrations and demands.

Egalitarianism and Democratization. The trends toward more equality in individual rights and opportunities and the expansion of democratic decision making that have existed since the Renaissance will continue into the future. Whether or not the equal rights amendment passes, the judiciary will afford fully equal rights to women. By the end of 1990, several women will be police executives in the United States. Even the FBI will have placed a female in a top level management position by the turn of the century. Most states in an effort to accommodate immigration from Spanish speaking areas will have dropped rules prohibiting people who have not attained citizenship from serving on police agencies.

Several states will have modified their police standards to permit police agencies to employ persons with backgrounds of criminal participation or social deviancy.

Many of the traditional authoritarian management features presently existing in police agencies will have been modified - although not totally disregarded by the end of the century. Many police management, supervisory and specialist positions will be abolished during the 1980's. There will be more integration of police and human service operations in local communities. Community orientation of local governments will in many respects move the police closer to fulfilling community residents' expectations and create more tension with the broader government. As a result of such changes, investigative functions and intelligence gathering will be shifted away from local police to state and federal agencies.

Natural and Manmade Disasters. The tremendous population expansion throughout the world during the past century has increased the total damage that accompanies any substantial disaster. Even though the U. S. population has been stabilizing, it has been concentrating in selective regions. It is ironic that the regions of the United States with the highest risk of natural disaster frequently have the highest density of population. The "cocooning" of modern life makes individuals less self-reliant in meeting emergencies. Earthquakes and storms should receive greater attention by police policy makers.

Hazards stemming from human produced causes also deserve more attention. A single widespread power outage can cause greater social and economic harm to modern day society than all of burglaries cause in several years. What will happen if the entire East Coast loses electrical power for two weeks? Local police have not, to date, devoted any significant amount of attention to planning for such occurrences.

The danger from a nuclear disaster is one of the greatest manmade threats for the immediate future. Nuclear blackmail attempts will be a common police problem within the next few years. The risks related to nuclear generating plants may pall in comparison to those of intentionally set nuclear devices. There is a high probability that such a device will be detonated someplace in America by the year 2000.

Development of portable instruments for detecting nuclear devices should be proceeding rapidly. Long range detection equipment for radiation should be as common in police operations of the 1990's as radar sets are today.

Skill Requirements. Present day local police agencies and personnel simply are not prepared for the future. The financial, institutional, and time impediments to moving local police to a

condition of readiness will not soon be overcome. Consequently, many of the law enforcement responsibilities will be inconspicuously shifted from local police. Major investigative responsibilities in the so-called "white collar" areas will be assumed by statewide and federal agencies. New investigative organizations for environmental, consumer, and technological crimes will have to be organized at the local levels of government. Criminalistics, training, information, and major planning activities will be moved from direct police control to more regional positions where they will be available to the entire justice system.

Attention should be devoted to enhancing the ability of local police in performing the regulatory functions of local communities and providing emergency services - especially those services related to interpersonal and social conflict. Local police are in the best position of any governmental operation to handle such functions. In addition, local police officers are already better prepared by experience and abilities to focus on the areas.

Conclusion. What the future may, should and will be is conditioned both by situations beyond the recognition or influence of any of us and by our own frames of reference and perspectives. Perhaps the greatest error of the past in the police field has been our narrow focus on solving immediate problems by relying exclusively on experiences from our recent past.

Academic programs have no greater obligation than to provide a comprehensive perspective, oriented toward the future. We in the police field are facing a hazardous but exciting future - a future in which we can help to shape police into an institution of great social utility and value or a tool of state repression. It will be interesting to look back in the year 2000 and see the consequences of our efforts.